

July 17, 1974

MINUTES - WSAG

Time and Place: 10:10 a.m. - 10:48 a.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Indochina

Participants:

Chairman	Henry A. Kissinger	JCS	Gen. George S. Brown LTG John W. Pauly
State	Robert Ingersoll Amb. Graham Martin Winston Lord Montague Stearns George Vest	CIA	William Colby Theodore Shackley
Defense	William Clements Robert Ellsworth R/A Thomas J. Bigley	NSC	Richard Kennedy W. Richard Smyser William Stearman James Barnum

NSC review completed

NSA, State, USAF reviews  
completed

JCS review completed

MORI/CDF Pages 1-6 per  
C03233261

TOP SECRET//SENSITIVE XGDS

Attached to State memo from Kennedy/Stearman for HAK, 16 July 1974

Secretary Kissinger: Bill (Mr. Colby), do you want to give us a briefing?

Mr. Colby briefed from the attached text.

Secretary Kissinger: Share what view?

Mr. Colby: We're not sure whether the Khmer Communists share Sihanouk's private views that he is interested in talking directly with the U.S., but only after we withdraw our support to Phnom Penh.

Secretary Kissinger: They certainly don't want to talk to us after they withdraw.

Mr. Colby continued to brief.

Secretary Kissinger: Do any go north? (referring to the statement in the briefing that some 94,000 North Vietnamese troops have infiltrated to the south in the last 10 months.)

Mr. Colby: Some have gone North, but a very limited number. We don't have an accurate figure, but believe it to be very few.

(continued to brief)

Secretary Kissinger: How many casualties did they suffer last year?

Mr. Colby: We estimate about 40,000--mostly North Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese lost somewhere between 11,000 and 12,000.

Secretary Kissinger: That compares to what when the war was going on, 180,000 casualties? You're talking about dead or casualties?

Mr. Colby: Dead.

Secretary Kissinger: Then a total of 100,000 casualties would not be unreasonable.

Mr. Colby: That's right. I think if you factor in the estimated number of wounded you could get to that figure.

Secretary Kissinger: Then they are suffering quite an attrition rate.

Mr. Colby: That's right, and they have accomplished nothing.

Secretary Kissinger: Seems to me they are worse off today than they were in 1963.

Mr. Colby: I would say about the same--maybe they are a bit worse off.

Secretary Kissinger: What do you think it would take them to push it (South Vietnam) over, an additional 100,000 men?

Mr. Colby: I think it is a real question as this point whether they can push South Vietnam over at all.

Secretary Kissinger: What do you think, Graham (Amb. Martin)?

Amb. Martin: I don't think they could.

Mr. Colby: I really doubt that they could push it over. True, South Vietnam would lose a lot of men, but I think they could hold. They might take the northern corps area.

Secretary Kissinger: Did you say they would inflict heavy losses?

Mr. Colby: Terrible. (finished briefing)

Secretary Kissinger: The principle purpose of this meeting is to review the Indochina situation. I want to reiterate that our basic policy is to preserve South Vietnam's independence and integrity. I appreciate that everyone here is in agreement with proceeding along that line. What we do in South Vietnam is an example of our entire foreign policy. If we fail there, we fail everywhere. So, basically, I would like everybody to lean forward, to encourage Graham (Amb. Martin) and to help in what he needs to get the job done.

Mr. Clements: I think we all agree on that, Henry. Our big problem, though, is on the Hill. We are really between a rock and a hard place on the money situation.

Secretary Kissinger: I know that. This is not intended as criticism of what you all are doing. I understand your problems and appreciate your efforts. I will do everything I can on the Hill--I think everybody here will.

Mr. Clements: It's just this Hill thing. If we could get what we want, we'll be in good shape.

Secretary Kissinger: I know. Can you get a carrier around to Yankee Station if the situation heats up?

Gen. Brown: Yes, we could.

Secretary Kissinger: How much time would it take?

Gen. Brown: Four to five days.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, Graham (Amb. Martin) can give us a sign if he thinks a military move would be useful.

Amb. Martin: If we can get the level of military assistance that we enjoyed last year and better communication between here and out there, I think we will be in good shape. I think the lack of communication is our real problem.

Mr. Clements: The real problem came up last year when we overspent.

Secretary Kissinger: I don't know all the details, but my point, and I'm speaking for the President when I say this, is that we're serious about our effort in South Vietnam. Any testifying I can do, let me know, I'll be glad to do it. Any support any of you need let me know, you'll get it.

Mr. Clements: As I look at it, when we're working on this funding we have to establish some priorities. It looks to me like there is no question but what we will have to drop/out <sup>something</sup>. I don't know what it will be, but the F5Es are certainly not on top of the list.

Amb. Martin: The psychological impact....

Gen. Brown: Our point is that if the funding situation is as dire as you paint it, it becomes a question of the F5Es or some other type of expendables.

Amb. Martin: I understand your problem. We would just like to be in on the beginning of this thing so that we can give you some guidance.

Secretary Kissinger: Did they ever get the TOW missiles?

Gen. Brown: Yes they did.

Mr. Colby: A related question is the signal Hanoi would receive as a result of a sharp drawdown of personnel in Thailand. We're looking at the various options in a paper we will have over to you later.

Mr. Stearns: What's this?

Mr. Colby: In relation to NSDM 249.

Mr. Stearns: Oh.

Secretary Kissinger: Bill (Mr. Clements) has been sneaking forces out of Thailand like crazy over the past several months. I'm not in favor of a rapid drawdown. What is our schedule?

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Gen. Brown: I don't have it with me.

Mr. Clements: I think it's 27,000 by January 1 of next year.

Mr. Colby: By next year we'll be under the ceiling anyway.

Secretary Kissinger: I don't know why we should wait until next year. Options are being negotiated.

Mr. Clements: Well, we'll come back in with the lowest number.

Mr. Colby: (to Secretary Kissinger) You'll get a paper on the options.

Secretary Kissinger: I don't want to trigger a North Vietnamese attack if we can avoid it. A too rapid drawdown might encourage them.

Mr. Colby: Another question is some possible actions we might take in Laos....

Secretary Kissinger: Before we leave Vietnam, are there any other decisions you need?

Amb. Martin: I don't think so.

Secretary Kissinger: Good. Laos.

Mr. Colby: We're putting together a paper--I think we'll have it over to you in a week or so--on some proposals to strengthen the non-Communist side in Laos. It suggests a number of actions and has various options you might want to support. It distinguishes between two things--the old guys and some new, younger, and more promising people. We do not advocate support for the old duffers of 1962. There are some newer, younger people--colonels and lower ranking generals--we have our mind on.

Secretary Kissinger: Do you need 40-Committee approval?

Mr. Colby: I don't know. The Ambassador in Laos has expressed concern over the paper. He doesn't want us to get involved.

Secretary Kissinger: Why isn't he involved now? What is it he opposes?

Mr. Colby: Well, he doesn't understand what we are proposing. We intend to keep him informed and work it out with him.

Secretary Kissinger: Okay. Anybody opposed? Okay, go ahead. In Cambodia, it looks like things are not too bad.

Mr. Clements: We're in better shape in Cambodia, as far as the stocks are concerned, than we have been in a year.

Secretary Kissinger: (to Mr. Colby) Are you going to give me another one of your lousy predictions, like the one last August that the government would fall in three to six months--six months at the latest?

Mr. Colby: Your memory is too good!

Gen. Brown: On Thailand, we're going to have to have a decision on whether or not to continue operating those P-3s from U-Tapao. We've put a hold on them since the story broke.

Secretary Kissinger: How did they (the Thais) find out where we were flying them out of.

Mr. Clements: Those newspaper people. We agreed to let them go up there to take a look at the base. Some of them were able to identify the planes as a reconnaissance aircraft. The story just snowballed from there.

Mr. Smyser: One of them was being loaded right while they were there.

Secretary Kissinger: If we don't make an issue out of it...

Amb. Martin: If we just would have taken it up with the Thai in the first place, we wouldn't have the problem. I think we can walk it back through without any trouble. But, I would suggest we knock them off until we fix it up with the Thais.

Secretary Kissinger: My instinct is to.... Can we fly them without telling the Thais?

Amb. Martin: No. I think we should just knock them off for a while.

Mr. Stearns: We're preparing a cable on that.

Secretary Kissinger: What are you saying?

Mr. Stearns read from draft cable.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, let's wait to see what happens.

17 July 1974

CONFIDENTIAL FOR  
17 JULY NSAS MEETING

THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

1. In Laos, Prime Minister Souvanna's serious illness is threatening the stability--and perhaps even the viability--of the coalition government.

2. So far, both sides are taking the leadership crisis in stride--but until there is a clearer picture of Souvanna's chances for recovery, rash actions by either side cannot be ruled out.

1. Souvanna is aware that the present situation is "dangerous, and has asked his two deputy prime ministers to see that there are no incidents in Vientiane between Lao Army and Pathet Lao troops.

2. Souvanna has also instructed the deputy prime ministers to oversee the cabinet's activities, to make routine decisions, but to defer major ones.

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1. Hence, such key issues as PRG recognition, foreign troop withdrawals, and POWs appear to be in limbo for some time.

C. A political breather is probably welcome enough to the non-Communist members of the cabinet, who need time to organize and strengthen the broad political front that they recently set up.

1. Particularly, they must kindle more enthusiasm among the younger non-Communist elements--some of whom are at best lukewarm toward the front.

II. If Souvanna dies or is unable to continue in office, the succession will be messy.

A. Under the existing constitution, the King can name a new prime minister from within the cabinet, who would then have to be approved by the National Assembly. (He could also take charge himself, or appoint an entirely new government--with the concurrence of the assembly.)

1. The hitch is that last week Souvanna ruled that the dormant, rightist-controlled assembly must be dissolved.



2. The Communists agreed, enthusiastically and would probably oppose any effort to revive it.

B. No matter what the procedures, the succession would likely center on four candidates:

- Non-Communist Deputy Premier Leuam In-sisongmay;
- Communist Deputy Premier Phoumi Vongvichit;
- Neutralist Interior Minister Phang Phongsavan;
- and Lao Communist leader Souphanouvong, the chairman of the advisory political council.

C. Phang would seem to be the best bet, since neither the non-Communists nor the Communists are likely to approve a candidate from the other side.

1. He is ambitious, relatively close to Souvanna, and experienced in dealing with both sides.

III. In Cambodia, government forces survived the dry season in relatively good fashion, but with a net loss in territorial holdings.

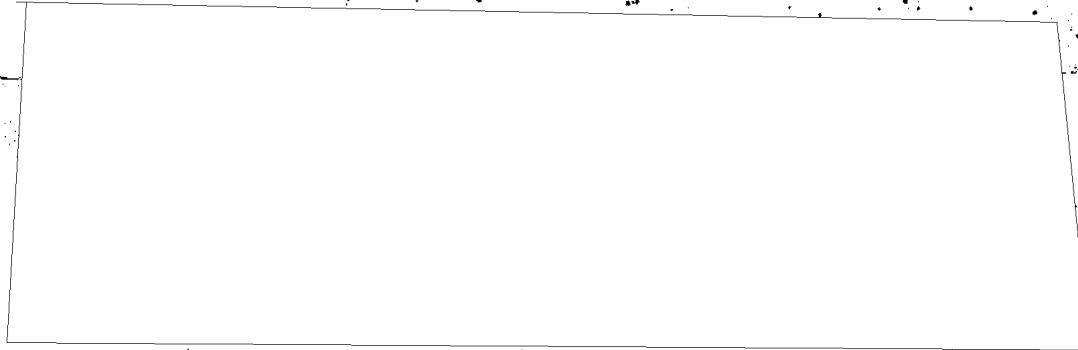
A. We expect the Khmer Communists to continue attacking isolated government enclaves in the countryside--at least until the rainy season ends in November--but a major new initiative

against Phnom Penh is unlikely during this period.

IV. Sihanouk and the Khmer Communists have denounced the government's call on July 9 for unconditional negotiations.

A. Sihanouk reiterated that the withdrawal of US support to Phnom Penh is essential to a peaceful solution.

B.



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V. In South Vietnam, the general level of fighting has decreased in the central and southern battlefronts in recent weeks, despite a flareup in minor incidents designed to harass the GVN's provincial elections. There are signs, however, that the Communists may soon step up tactical activity in the northern part of the country.

A. They have moved large quantities of war materiel into this area, and have shifted several combat units south into Thua Thien Province.

3. The South Vietnamese have ordered units into contested areas, in an attempt to blunt any Communist actions.

VI. We see no signs, however, that Hanoi is changing its strategy of limited warfare.

- A. Infiltration has slowed, with no new troops detected moving south since early June.

1. Some 94,000 moved south in the past 10 months. This is about the same number as in the 1972-73 cycle, but well below the peak years of heavy fighting.
2. Half of the troops went to southern and central South Vietnam where Communist manpower requirements were high because of the fighting in 1973. These areas have also been the scene of some of the heaviest military action since last fall.

VII. As for the ICCS, the four delegations are still squabbling.

- A. Both the Indonesians and the Iranians are frustrated by the obstructionist tactics of the Hungarians and the Poles.

1. The Indonesians have reduced their numbers

but do not now seem to be planning an early pullout. Jakarta feels that Iran's ineffectiveness is adding to the problem.

2. The Iranians have hinted they might withdraw if they decide their presence is serving no useful purpose.

3. Both the Hungarians and the Poles have abandoned some regional sites.

3. Hanoi and the PRG probably consider a stale-mated ICCS useful, but do not want it to become effective enough to expose Communist breaches of the cease-fire.

1. They are continuing to block the Commission's operations, and have refused additional contributions to its budget.

VIII. President Thieu's government, meanwhile, remains stable, and there are no signs of internal political unrest.

A. Thieu recently ordered the government to cut its involvement in party politics to remove the stigma of a one-party state.

1. A "loyal opposition" coalition will probably organize once it is satisfied Thieu

is serious about getting his administration out of party affairs.

2. Local elections this past Sunday recorded 80 percent voter participation, despite widespread Communist harassment; government-supported candidates won a clear majority.

3. Government pacification programs continue to make good progress.

1. By the end of this year, Saigon hopes to have resettled its refugees.

2. Since the end of 1972, the government has provided new homes for over one million of its citizens.

C. There are some bright spots even in the economy--still South Vietnam's most serious problem.

1. Consumer prices seem to be leveling off, although they have risen by 30 percent this year on top of last year's 65 percent.

2. Thieu has reorganized his economics ministry to make better use of foreign aid and domestic revenue.

3. New oil and gas leases off the coast have brought in additional revenue.